

# Enhancing Business Performance through Religiosity Leaderships Style among the Small and Medium Enterprises

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**Abstract** - The objective of the study is to investigate the role of religiosity leaderships style among the top management of halal food and beverages products small and medium sizes manufacturers towards their business performance. Presently, leadership style is one of crucial elements for leaders or managers in the organization to provide business directions, implement strategic plans and motivate employees. Nowadays the importance of leadership not only be influenced by participative, transformational or laissez-faire but the guidance from the religiosity also be equally significant. Usually, leadership practices are influenced by individual's religious liaison and religiosity practices. In this study, it was intended to fill a gap where a few studies have been done so far on religiosity leadership at SMEs but not particularly in the manufacturing of halal F&B products. Thus, the study proposes a theoretical framework in order to examine the effect of religiosity leadership's style towards the SMEs' business performance which moderated by halal entrepreneurial orientation. A quantitative design with a simple random sampling and establishment by emails (online survey questionnaires) will be distributed to 370 SMEs in Malaysia. The data were analyzed by SPSS and Smart SEM-PLS. The finding of the study will indicate that the religiosity leaderships have mixed results. In this context, religiosity leaderships make a significant contribution to SMEs' in a way of increasing business performance at a certain market segmentation.

**Keywords:** *business, halal, leadership, performance, SMEs, religiosity*

## 1. Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is described as an engine of market economic' growth in any country with a least 95% of the total registered enterprises to produce goods and services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The unique criteria of these SMEs that it has the fastest rate of growth and development as compared to all another type of industries. Besides that, they have more prospect to react to challenges and changing environments with adaptability, competitive, flexibility and competitive advantage. They just not only source for the economic contributor, these SMEs played an important role in the various aspect of social development; increasing the employment rate, income generation, sourcing of innovation and a cradle of future market orientation [1] [2]. With the revolution of economic globalization, the rivalry among the business organizations mainly the SMEs are becoming more competitive and the competency of information, communication, and technology (ICT), innovation and leadership style still continue to be among the critical success factors [3] [4].

Besides conventional markets, an understanding of the agility of halal market demand required tremendous efforts from the SMEs leaderships to innovate their resources with superior values aligned with Shariah Laws. According to a Thomson Reuters report, the halal F&B sector will grow to USD\$2.5 trillion in sales by 2019, which is 21.2 % of global food expenditure. Therefore, there is a lot of opportunities for SMEs businesses to produce halal based products. With the adaptation of religiosity leaderships style, millions of SMEs globally are now realized how vital their businesses require the halal certification. Specifically, halal certification, as well as halal logo, play a critical role in confirming compliance with Shariah Laws and convincing Muslim consumers globally for the trustworthiness of the halal products [5].

## 1.1 Objectives of Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of halal entrepreneurial orientation (HEO) on the relationship between the religiosity leadership style (RLS) and the business performance (BP) among the halal food and beverages (F&B) manufacturers in Malaysia. Specifically, there are two objectives;

- a) To examine the effect of RLS towards its relationship with the BP, and
- b) To examine the effect of HEO towards the relationship between the RLS and the BP.

## 1.2 Significant of Study

The significance of the current study ascends from the limitation of halal F&B studies among the SMEs manufacturers that addressed the roles of RLS and the HEO towards the enhancement of BP. In addition, the study also presents its empirical results from the halal F&B sector to understand how leadership's style can enhance the performance of BP perhaps in other halal sectors such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and ingredients.

## 2.0 Literature Review

The business organization is considered as an engine for social development in terms of revenue generation, employment and economic development. The effective and strategic implementation of the decision-making process is a vital element for managers to generate income from the business innovation activities. Therefore, organizations must have managing people to manage people to work towards common goals of vision and missions [6]. And this is an ultimately philosophies and value of the top management actions that have a significant impact on the strategic decision making of the organization; profits, reputation and long-term sustainability.

### 2.1 Leaderships Style

Leadership style is a leader's actions and they have different styles and approaches in providing direction, implement strategic planning and motivating people who under his/her commanding. Leadership style also can be described as a way of a person (high-rank position) uses power or influence to lead and direct other people. According to [7] [8] the concept of leadership is a system where he/her manage the organization's resources including the people, the time and the context of interaction upwards (among top management) and downwards (subordinates) in carrying strategically orders to be performed.

To be an excellent leader, a person who is holding a high ranking position in the business organization, must have

an element of strategic leadership as well as communication as a fundamental stand [9].

Then other styles of leadership may be beneficial to be merged because the most appropriate leadership style depends on the function of the leader, the subordinates and the situation. Currently, there were about 15 different leadership's styles described in the literature reviews commonly found in the social sciences and business management areas such as autocratic, authentic, democratic, laissez-faire, transactional, transformational, servant, reward, and charismatic [10][11]. Among these styles, transformational is often the style used in the management of business organization where the fundamental is based on integrity and high emotional intelligence. The academic literature also found out the spirituality [12] [13] [14][15] and religiosity [16][17][18] styles are significant elements owned by the leaders in strategic decision making [19].

### 2.2 Religiosity

[20] defined the term religiosity as a practice carried out by an individual who acknowledged to a faith or believes based on something he/she accept as truth. Other researchers [21], religiosity can be somewhat like metaphysical or apprehensive with the ground and persistence to be worshipped as known people as God. According to [22], religiosity is about the human nature based on ethical behavior and attitude. While [23] propose religiosity talk about practices and depth engagement with one's religious values and activities. Therefore, it becomes a central standpoint of an individual's to have a religion and faith. On the other hand, religiosity is also known in terms of intellectual on religious knowledge, beliefs and its teachings that influence the individual's action and rationality [24].

There was a study done by [16] found out the significant impact of the religiosity towards the job performance. Employees with high influence of religiosity have the significant impact on their job performance and expedite the business performance as well. Their results show that top management people that also influenced by religiosity have motivated others to perform job very well [16] [25]. They suggested by doing excellence in job performance will also a potential factor to improve the business performance. In addition, [26] suggested besides the elements of religiosity be implemented, the element of culture also potential to make such significant effect on the business. Based on findings by [27], there is a significant relationship between RLS and business performance. There are two distinct aspects of religiosity as proposed by [28]; intrinsic and extrinsic. These aspects were constructed into Religious Orientation Scale (ROS) and mainly use for exploring the religious behavior and health condition among the patients in the psychology and health discipline [29][30][31][32]. In addition, the New Indices of Religious Orientation Revised (NIROR) also be chosen to measure the religiosity with two perspectives; intrinsic and extrinsic [33][34]and [35].

Basically, the intrinsic refers to the person who achieves the ultimate orientation of religious and more meaningful relationship with God. On the other hand, extrinsic much more on the application of religious lessons into practices like self-esteem, confident and honesty [36]. Since then, the ROS has been modified to suit in many studies such as social sciences; consumer ethics, financial and business organizations [16][35][36][37]. Thus, in this study, the instrument for survey questionnaire has been taken from modified of ROS and NIROR that applied by [31][33][37].

### 2.3 Business Performance

Every business organization has set up their measurement to achieve a revenue by setting up the corporate goals, methods used to achieve the goals and implementing the strategic way for managers to effectively achieve those goals. In addition, business performance of the organization not only measured by profits but also towards the delivery of corporate social responsibility (CSR). As claimed by [38], the managers' religiosity act as a significant role in their responsiveness and conducts a lot of activities that relating to CSR.

A study by [39] also claimed that managers' religiosity plays the major contribution in determining the organization's CSR implementation. The similar results found by [40] among the Australian managers, where the more practiced of religiosity makes them more contribute to CSR activities. [41], found out there was a significant relationship between religiosity and the business performance. The more influence of religiosity applications by the leaders brings more emotional well-being among them and improve the business performance.

### 2.4 Halal Entrepreneurial Orientation

Previous studies on business strategy showed a significant impact of top management people towards the entrepreneurial orientation (EO) in many business organizations [42][6][43][44][45]. Due to that and in the current global business environment, it is imperative for managers to implement EO as a vital strategic in making the decision [6]. So why EO is so much important for managers in managing their business operations? Basically, the EO is a process of creating something much different in terms of value, time and effort (unique) in providing product/service and receiving personal satisfaction and financial as returns [46]. Perhaps, they should consider the *Blue Ocean Strategy* instead of *Red Ocean Strategy*. The EO also is known for its capability as the determinant driver for business performance [47]. Prominence researchers suggested the EO elements must consisting of mix innovative behavior and strategic orientation to create new opportunity via the processes of innovative, pro-active and risk-taking [48][49][50][9].

Although the EO was considered as the antecedent of growth and competitive advantage for SMEs' business performance, indeed it was proven. But the real impact of EO towards BP somehow on certain condition markets like environmental turbulence or economic crisis, the consequences were severe [51][52]. This showed that the EO's impact can be uncertain especially the elements of pro-activeness and innovativeness [51][53][52]. Nowadays, the halal trademark becomes one of the most attractive processed F&B products that worth more than \$836.6 billion in 2016 [54]. Particularly the global halal F&B market is expected to reach \$2.55 trillion by 2024 as the rising demand for a healthy and hygienic manner of consumption. Figure 1 below shows the incremental of halal demand starting from 2014 towards 2024.

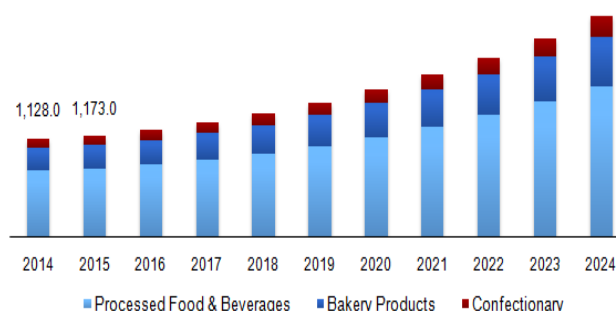


Figure 1. The Halal Global Market Revenue

Currently, the skeptical of Muslim's slaughtering technique (by the Non-Muslim people) already been dissolved after the scientific explanations discovered it was the best method to slaughter the animals. Perhaps because of that, the growth of awareness from the Muslim and Non-Muslim population towards the safety, hygienic and healthy of F&B products may drive the sales further more than forecasting.

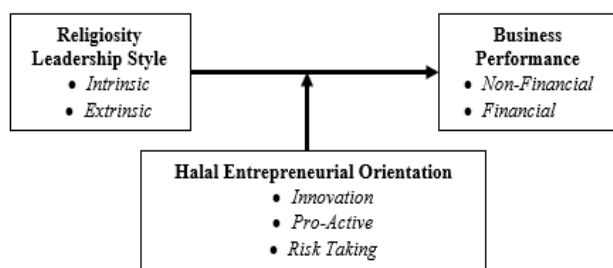
In the comparison of the HEO to EO (from conventional perspective) was not much different except the HEO application towards all the processes including the decision making for business strategy implementation must comply with Shariah Laws (Islamic Principles). And because of that, any F&B manufacturers that involved into halal business must be aware of the quality, cleanliness, and safety including the logistics practices as underlined by the Shariah Laws from the origin of the farm to the fork [55][56]. In Malaysia, the guarantee of halal on products and services are permitted by solely *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia* (JAKIM) via certification and halal logo. In order to make it officially as a country standard, the Department of Malaysia Standards (MS) has issued the halal code to each segmentation of products or services. For example, the MS1500:2009 is for halal F&B products and the MS2400:2010 for halal assurance in the supply chain including the transportation, warehousing, and retailing activities.

From the perspective of RBV, the elements of individual's charismatic such as intelligent, knowledge, experience, trademarks, brand reputation and strategic ideas are useful for business organizations [57][58][59]. In addition to that, the values of spirituality and religiosity also influenced the individual (top management) to make decision making aligned with the Shariah Laws [16]. Therefore, the HEO is a vital driver for business organizations' survival [60] and to compete in the globalization market [61] that influenced by highly consumers' demand.

## 2.5 Study Hypothetical Model

Figure 2 presents the study hypothetical model which be the guidance for the study. The RLS becomes the independent variable and the BP is the dependent variable while the HEO is the moderating variable. From the literature review perspectives, it will be a significant effect of the RLS towards the BP. Furthermore, the proposal of the hypothesis also suggested that the HEO will make the significant changes towards that relationship. The HEO will increase the level of RLS towards the BP among the SMEs in halal F&B products in Malaysia. Therefore, the hypothesis of the study are:

- H<sub>1</sub>) There is a significant effect of RLS and the BP, and  
H<sub>2</sub>) There is a significant effect of HEO towards the relationships of RLS and the BP.



**Figure 2.** The Study Hypothetical Model

## 3.0 Methodology

This study is applying the descriptive quantitative method by using an e-mail (with survey questionnaire form) as a distribution mode of primary data collection. The respondents of the study are coming from the SMEs particularly in the manufacturing sector of halal F&B products in Malaysia. In addition, SMEs have minimized internal management infringements and also less external constraints mainly by the government [62]. The simple random selection was made from a list of respondents that are obtained from the online halal database ([www.halal.gov.my](http://www.halal.gov.my)). The population size of the respondents were nearly 5600 SMEs (See Table 1). By using *Gmail* as an intermediary, the survey questionnaires were sent out to 370 SMEs as suggested

by [63] as a minimum recommended size. The data from the respondents was collected during three months periods. Based on past studies, the response rate in Malaysia particularly among the SMEs business management fields, the average 13% to 25% was considered satisfactory [64][65].

**Table 1.** F&B Manufacturing Sector

Manufacturing	Volume
SMEs	47,698
Large Companies	1,435
<i>SMEs (Halal Certificates)</i>	5,556
Large Companies (Halal Certificates)	1,035

## 3.1 Measurement

In this study, the instrument or the survey questionnaires were developed and used established scales that had been tested by past existing research [50][6]. The primary variables and constructs considered in this study include (i) religiosity leadership style (RLS), (ii) halal entrepreneurial orientation (HEO), and (iii) business performance (BP). Additionally, the control variables assessing the respondents; age, gender, religion, type of organization, custody of halal certification and the number of products produced were included in the data analyses.

The study intends to distribute the survey questionnaire by *Gmail* to 370 SMEs of halal F&B in Malaysia. The whole process of data collection will be done in three months. The sample of the population was selected based on the simple random method and targeted the top management people. The responses were based on their working experience and perceptions. The email returns were will be recorded and registered into the SPSS (version 23.0) after any incomplete emails that will be uncounted. To investigate the issue of non-response bias (since the survey questionnaire are self-reported), the first batch of emails of the responses received were compared with the second batch of emails received; it will confirm to achieve there were no significant differences found by testing with a Harman one-factor to ensure common method variance (CMV) is not a potential threat to the validity [66].

The religiosity measurements were adapted from the *Religious Orientation Scale* (ROS) [33][37] and *New Indices of Religious Orientation Revised* (NIROR) [33][34][35]. The religiosity construct or the RLS were divided into two categories; intrinsic (8 items) and extrinsic (9 items). On the other hand, the construct of business performance or BP was modified and derived from [52][65][51][67]. The BP consists of 2 categories; 7 items in non-financials and 5 items in financial (e.g., ROI). Meanwhile, the measurement of HEO is consisting

of 3 constructs; innovative (5 items), pro-active (6 items) and risk-taking (4 items). All the measurements were taken from [42][53][65][44][51]. In addition to halal orientation, measurements are adapted from several works such as [68][69]. A five-point Likert scale was used for all the measurements and respondents were required to rate (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

### 3.2 Statistical Methods

For the initial measurement, the data entry was applied the SPSS (version 23.0) and statistically analyzed by Smart PLS-SEM (version 3.0). This technique was used to test the measurement model and the hypotheses [70]. In addition, the PLS-SEM is considered one of the latest quantitative analytical techniques and widely used in business management and social sciences [71]. According to [72], the PLS-SEM can also be applied to forecast the success of the theoretical framework or the study's model. To evaluate the measurement model, there is 5 type of assessments should be applied; the factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE) and the discriminant validity [73]. In addition, another test to measure is the structural model which showed the relationships that were hypothesized [74] and [73] recommend by looking at the  $R^2$ , effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) and the predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) to assess the structural model.

### 4.0 Conclusion

The study was designed to examine the contribution of RLS towards BP which moderated by the HEO. At this moment, SMEs encounter a lot of difficulties; lack of know-how on technology, international market orientation, poor product quality, leadership and the issue of productivity. In order to overcome such difficulties require significant commitment from top management and alliances. The leadership's component, for example, has been recognized as a strategy that can improve business performance mainly among the SMEs [75]. Moreover, the promotion of RLS will support the organization growth and entrepreneurial activity [27]. On the other hand, the implementation of EO is not much varied from the HEO. Thus, hopefully, the present study will find how HEO can make a significant contribution to SMEs' business performance among the F&B halal manufacturers which has been proven in past studies [42][52][70][65]. According to [53] suggestion, the HEO should be a priority for SMEs to develop their own fundamental economy where the new opportunities such as halal global market should not be taken for granted. Exploiting such opportunities is completely up to managers' willingness to redesign organizational practice and decision-making by practicing RLS. Importantly managers need to identify and implement the relative strength of RLS and the use of HEO strategy in penetrating halal global markets. This is vital for SMEs to integrate such relationship into strategic

implementation, thereby strengthening the competitive advantage.

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